

# Course Syllabus



## Biology of Sea Turtles -- ZOO4405 Spring 2022

### ***Contact information***

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***Class schedule*** Tuesday, Periods 4-5 (10:40 – 12:35)

Thursday, Period 4 (10:40 – 11:30)

***Class location*** 222 Carr Hall

***Office hours*** Thursdays, Period 5 (11:45-12:35) in 320 Carr Hall or by appointment

*If you are experiencing any problems with the class, please see me as soon as possible – before or after class, during office hours, or by appointment.*

## **Objectives**

This 3-credit course will focus on the current major issues in sea turtle biology, conservation, and management. Each Tuesday, there will be lectures by the instructor or guest speakers or the class will work on pre-designated group research projects. Each Thursday we will discuss readings, explore recent research, and identify research needs. Readings for class discussions will be both classic papers and recent literature.

## **Required Textbook**

Witherington, Blair & Dawn. 2015. *Our Sea Turtles: A practical guide for the Atlantic and Gulf, from Canada to Mexico*. Pineapple Press, Sarasota, Florida. Copies of the textbook are on course reserve at Marston Science Library, available two hours during the day or overnight.

## **Basis of Grade**

*If you have any questions about your grade, please see me as soon as possible.*

The course grade is based on the following breakdown of 100 possible points:

Class participation including attendance (30%)  
Written discussion questions (16%)  
Group Research Project (34%)  
Group Presentation for discussion session (10%)  
Assorted individual assignments (10%)

Thus, 56% of the grade is based on individual work and 44% on group work. No exams are given.

**Class participation:** Grade is based on attendance and quality of participation in class discussions. Punctual attendance at each of the 28 class periods is worth 0.5% of the grade for a total of 14% of the grade. Substantive participation in each of the 8 class discussions during which the student is not a presenter is worth 2% of their grade for a total of 16% of the grade. Each student is ranked either high, low or none for their contributions during discussions. High participation requires at least one substantive contribution during the class discussion.

**Written discussion questions:** Each student not leading the discussion session writes two substantive questions based on the readings and submits them before each of the discussion sessions. If there is more than one assigned reading, only one question can be based on each reading. Each student will write questions for eight discussion sessions for a total of 16 questions. Grade is based on both content and written communication. For each pair of questions, grades are assigned as:

Excellent = 2.0 points  
Good = 1.5 points  
Average = 1.0 point  
Poor = 0.5 point

## Examples of Not Substantive and Substantive Questions

### Not substantive question

How can we decrease the amount of plastic debris entering the oceans?

### Substantive question

Nelms et al. noted “turtles in early life history stages, that are small in size may be at higher risk of mortality from plastic ingestion due to their smaller less robust digestive tracts” and Schuyer et al. noted “oceanic life stage were significantly more like to ingest debris than turtles of an unknown stage”. However based on their literature reviews we do not have as much data on this life stage so how can we get more data and do you think these findings would change if we had more data or be substantiated?

**Group Research Project:** Instructor assigns four students to each of five research groups and assigns one of five research projects created by the instructor to each group. Grade is based on quality of research results, oral presentation of results, and written presentation of results in a poster. In addition to my assessment, each student gives me anonymously a ranking of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very poor with an explanation of why the rank is assigned for the other students in his/her Research Group.

The final poster is worth 25 points (25% of course grade) and is graded by each student, the instructor, and a guest faculty member as follows:

Informative title:	2 points
Objectives:	4 points
Introduction:	4 points
Materials and Methods:	3 points
Results:	4 points
Discussion:	4 points
Overall clarity:	4 points

Only the scores from the instructor and guest faculty member are used in assigning the grade to the poster. Students grade each poster and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each poster as an educational experience.

**Presentation for discussion session:** Instructor assigns two to three students to each of eight discussion groups. Each group selects a topic with two to three readings designated by the instructor. Each group creates a 5-10 minute Powerpoint introduction to the assigned topic and then leads the class discussion for a class period. Grade is based on quality of the Powerpoint presentation, the oral presentation, and the ability to maintain high level of discussion. In addition to my assessment, each student gives me anonymously a ranking of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very poor with an explanation of why the rank was assigned for the other students in his/her Discussion group.

## ***Use of masks***

All people inside of UF buildings are expected to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status. Thank you for respecting this learning community by doing so.

## ***Course Policies***

### *Class discussions*

This class cannot be a success if you do not attend. You should contribute to class discussions and be courteous to others in the classroom and respect each other's viewpoints. You are encouraged to ask either factual or interpretative questions and discuss the assigned reading material. You are expected to have completed reading assignments before class and be prepared to discuss the material.

### *Class attendance*

You are expected to attend all classes and arrive promptly. Please refrain from side discussions and distracting behavior (turn off cell phones). If you miss class due to an illness, family emergency, or approved University activity, you will need to provide documentation.

## ***Academic Honesty***

Quoted from the UF Website:

"Preamble: In adopting this [Honor Code](#), the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Student and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

*"The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.*

"On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."*

## ***University Support Services***

Resources are available on campus to help students meet academic goals and solve personal problems. Resources include:

1. [UF Counseling and Wellness Center](#), personal counseling (including mental health issues) and career counseling.
2. [Career Connection Center](#), career development assistance and counseling.

3. [CLAS Academic Advising Center](#) and [CALS Academic Advising Center](#) provide advice on course selection and course planning to meet graduation requirements.

Your well-being is important to all of us at the University of Florida. The **U Matter, We Care** initiative ([www.umatter.ufl.edu/](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/)) is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

### ***Disability Notice***

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Student Accessibility Services](#) or the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

### ***Instructor Evaluation***

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### ***University of Florida Text on In-Class Recording***

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class

lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Week	Activity / Topic
1	Introduction to class Basic biology of sea turtles
2	Shifting Baselines Introduce research projects 1 Select discussion presentation topics
3	Measure green turtle humeri First Class Discussion
4	Introduce research projects 2 Presentation of statistical analyses for five research projects Discussion of humeri repeatability results Roles of sea turtles in ecosystems

5	<p>Preparing for recovery of sea turtle populations with emphasis on green turtle grazing seagrass pastures</p> <p>Session for students to work on projects within their research groups either in classroom or elsewhere.</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Class Discussion</p>
6	<p>Sea turtle behavior – studies on large and small scales</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> Class Discussion</p>
7	<p>Discussion of posters: mechanics of making a poster at UF</p> <p>What makes a good poster?</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> Class Discussion</p>
8	<p>Progress Reports from each Research Project Group: ~15 min</p> <p>Powerpoint presentations with questions, statistical results, graphs of results, and conclusions</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> Class Discussion</p>
9	<p>Diseases and health issues of sea turtles</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> Class Discussion</p>
10	<p>Comparison of freshwater and marine turtles</p> <p>Session for students to work on projects within their research groups either in classroom or elsewhere</p>
11	<p>Legal harvest of sea turtles – what are the impacts</p> <p>Use of drones in sea turtle research</p>
12	<p>Draft poster presentations by each Research Group</p> <p>7<sup>th</sup> Class Discussion</p>

13	Sea turtle laws and international treaties 8 <sup>th</sup> Class Discussion
14	Final Research Project Poster Presentations to class and guests. Poster judging 9 <sup>th</sup> Class Discussion
15	Planning our future: expanding the known, learning the unknown, and minimizing the unknowable Course wrap-up